

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks on the Nomination of United States Air Force Chief of Staff General Charles Q. Brown, Jr., To Be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
May 25, 2023

The President. Good afternoon. Please, everybody, be seated. Thank you.

Federal Budget Negotiations/Public Debt Limit

Before I begin, I want to address a—ongoing budget negotiations with congressional leaders. I'll be very brief.

Speaker McCarthy and I have had several productive conversations, and our staffs continue to meet as we speak, as a matter of fact, and they're making progress.

I've made clear time and again: Defaulting on our national debt is not an option. The American people deserve to know that their Social Security payments will be there, that veterans hospitals remain open, and that economic progress will be made and we're going to continue to make it.

Default puts all that at risk. Congressional leaders understand that, and they've all agreed: There will be no default. And it's time for Congress to act now.

Now, I want to be clear that the negotiations we're having with Speaker McCarthy is about the outlines of what the budget will look like, not about default. It's about competing visions for America.

Under my administration, we've already cut the deficit by \$1.7 trillion in our first 2 years. But Speaker McCarthy and I have a very different view of who should bear the burden of additional efforts to get our fiscal house in order. I don't believe the whole burden should fall on the backs of middle class and working class Americans. My House Republican friends disagree.

Instead, Republicans passed a bill that would make huge cuts in important programs that millions of working and middle class Americans count on. Huge cuts in the number of teachers, police officers, Border Patrol agents, and increased wait times for Social Security claims. And I won't agree to that.

I put forward a proposal that will cut spending by more than \$1 trillion, that freezes spending for the next 2 years. That's on top of the nearly \$3 trillion in deficit reduction I previously proposed through a combination of spending cuts and new revenue raisers.

I've proposed making the wealthy begin to pay their fair share, which will reduce the deficit. But it won't cut programs for hard-working Americans depending on it—those funds—in order to continue big tax returns for the wealthiest Americans—America—and America's largest corporations.

But we can reduce the deficit both in short term and long term with a combination of spending cuts on programs that help Big Oil and Big Pharma by closing tax loopholes and making the wealthy pay their fair share.

I reduced the deficit, as I said, 1.1—\$1.7 trillion in my first 2 years without raising a cent in raising taxes above anyone making less than \$400,000.

The economy is growing. The only way to move forward is with a bipartisan agreement. And I believe we will come to an agreement that allows us to move forward and that protects the hard-working Americans of this country.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Nomination

Now, for the reason we're here. I'm sure you didn't come to hear that. [*Laughter*]

Vice President Harris, Secretary Austin, Representative Calvert, and Representative Calhoun—excuse me, Calhoun is not here. McCollum. And I want to thank you all for joining us.

And, Chairman Milley, I want to start by thanking you—and I really mean it—for your years of service as Chairman and for your lifetime of selfless commitment to our country.

And I also want to thank our—your incredible wife Hollyanne and your two children, Peter and Mary. You know, your family has served alongside you every single step of the way. And our entire country is grateful.

As Chairman, you have led our military through the most complex security environment our world has faced in a long, long time. And we've strengthened our alliances, from NATO to the Indo-Pacific, and built new partnerships, like AUKUS. We've participated—we've anticipated new threats in domains like space and cyber.

We've addressed challenges that transcend borders, and responding to global pandemics by tackling the existential threat of climate change. We've ended the longest war in American history. We've continued to take terrorists off the battlefield. And we've rallied the world to stand with the brave people of Ukraine as they defend their freedom against Russian aggression.

Though—through everything, Secretary Austin and I have had candid and direct counsel. I've valued his insight. And more than that, I've truly enjoyed working with you. I trust you completely. Completely.

You've helped set our country and our military on a course that will put us in the strongest possible position to succeed in the years ahead. I'm looking forward to continuing our work together as you finish your term and prepare to pass the baton to your successor.

So today I have the honor of introducing my nominee to be the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Charles Q. Brown, Jr. General, welcome.

General Brown is a warrior, descended from a proud line of warriors. His father, a U.S. Army Colonel, C.Q. Brown, served in Vietnam. His grandfather, U.S. Army Master Sergeant Robert E. Brown, Jr., led a segregated unit in World War II.

And command pilot General Brown brings to this role more than 3,000 hours of flying—flying experience, including 130 combat hours. He knows what it means to be in the thick of battle and how to keep your cool when things get hard, like when your F-16 was on fire.

[*Laughter*] And you returned to the base in Florida in 1991. C.Q. had to eject more than 300 miles—at 300 miles an hour, landing in the Everglades. That's a lot of fun, huh? [*Laughter*]

Well, I tell you what: He was back in the cockpit the next week with a new call sign, "Swamp Thang." [*Laughter*] New call sign. I asked him inside the Oval what it was like. But I'll tell you about that later. [*Laughter*]

General Brown is also a warfighter who has commanded in Europe, the Middle East, and Indo—and the Indo-Pacific. And he has an unmatched firsthand knowledge of our operational theaters and a strategic vision to understand how they all work together to ensure the security for the American people.

And while General Brown is a proud, butt-kicking American airman, first and always he's also been an operational leader of the joint force. He gained respect across every service from those who have seen him in action and have come to depend on his judgment. More than that, he

gained the respect of our allies and partners around the world, who regard General Brown as a trusted partner and a top-notch strategist.

No matter how complicated the mission, from helping build and lead the coalition now of more than 80 nations strong to counter ISIS threats in the Middle East, to positioning our Air Force for the future in Indo—in the Indo-Pacific, General Brown has built a reputation across the force as an unflappable and highly effective leader; as someone who creates an environment of teamwork, trust and then executes with excellence; and someone who smokes a mean brisket.

I understand you have that smoker still with you.

General Brown. Yes, sir. I do.

The President. You carry that around everywhere. Was it in your—I won't ask you that. [Laughter]

But General Brown has said he doesn't play for second place; he plays to win, and that's obvious. That mindset is going to be an enormous asset to me as Commander in Chief and to the United States of America as we navigate challenges of the coming years.

Over the past 3 years, as Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Brown has become known for his signature approach: "Accelerate change or lose." "Accelerate change or lose." General, you're right on. As I've often said, our world is at an inflection point, where the decisions we make today are going to determine the course of our world for decades to come.

And to keep American people safe, prosperous, and secure, we have to move fast and adapt quickly. We have to maintain a combat-credible force capable of deterring or defeating any potential threat. And we have to manage our competition with China and meet the reality of renewed aggression in Europe.

And we need to make sure we retain our competitive edge in an age where emerging technologies from—technologies, from AI to 3-D printing could fundamentally change the character of conflict.

With General Brown as Chairman, I know I'll be able to rely on his advice as a military strategist and as a leader of military innovation, dedicated to keeping our Armed Forces the best in the world. And they are the best in the history of the world, and that's a fact.

I'll also be able to rely on him for—as a thoughtful, deliberate leader who is unafraid to speak his mind, as someone who will deliver an honest message that needs to be heard and will always do the right thing when it's hard.

That's the number-one quality a President needs in a Chairman. And that's the leader—that's the leader—that all Americans meet—met 3 years ago when General Brown gave an unflinching video testimonial sharing his own experience of racism and his deep love of our country to which he's dedicated his entire adult life. It took real backbone, and it struck a chord not only with our military members but with Americans all across the country.

C.Q. is a fearless leader and an unyielding patriot. And that's why, 3 years ago, he was concerned by the United—confirmed by the United States Senate 98 to 0. I urge the Senate to once again confirm General Brown with the same—the same—overwhelming bipartisan support from—for his new role as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

And I also want to recognize C.Q.'s family: his wife Sharene. She is here—would you mind standing, Sharene? I know that's embarrassing you. [Laughter] Thank you. And his sons Sean and Ross.

Throughout General Brown's stellar career in the Air Force, C.Q. and Sharene have always put family first. And they both know from their own experience growing up in military families that it's not just the person who wears the uniform who serves, the whole family—the whole family—serves, and the whole family sacrifices on behalf of the Nation.

Sharene, you and C.Q. are true partners in our dedication to the health and well-being of the women and men in uniform and their families: "Five Thrive"—"Five and Thrive" initiative that's doing important work to address the greatest issues affecting military families: childcare, education, spousal employment, health care, and housing.

And I know that Jill and I look forward to working even more closely with you on these issues through her Joining Forces initiative.

Let me close with this. This year will mark the 75th anniversary of an integrated force and the 75th anniversary of women serving in the force and the 50th anniversary of the All-Volunteer force. We're celebrating the root of our national strength, the most American of ideas, the most self-evident truth: that all women and men are created equal.

And that no—no more powerful testament to this than the Armed Forces of the United States of America. The steps we've taken over the decades to harness the full diversity of our Nation have grown our Armed Forces into the greatest fighting force—and I'll say it again a second time—the greatest fighting force in the history of the world.

And, General Brown, you've been an essential leader in making our Nation and our force even stronger.

You've made history. And you have even made it as a Jeopardy clue. *[Laughter]* Did you know that? *[Laughter]* You made it as a Jeopardy Clue, the Daily Double no less. *[Laughter]*

Well—*[laughter]*—so, thank you, General Brown and Sharene and the whole family, for being willing to take on this mission. And I can thank no one better suited—think of no one better suited or more qualified to lead our force through the challenges and responsibility ahead.

And I look forward to having you at my side, advising me as the next Chairman and helping keep the American people safe.

And thank you all, and I thank all the military in the audience here. Thank you for your service, and thank your families as well. And may God protect our troops.

Thank you. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:52 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization.

Categories: Appointments and Nominations : Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, nomination, remarks.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Austin, Lloyd J., III; Brown, Charles Q., Jr.; Brown, Ross; Brown, Sean; Brown, Sharene; Calvert, Kenneth S.; Harris, Kamala D.; McCarthy, Kevin O.; McCollum, Betty L.; Milley, Hollyanne; Milley, Mark A.; Milley, Mary; Milley, Peter.

Subjects: AUKUS trilateral security partnership; Bipartisanship; China, relations with U.S.; Corporate tax rates; Diversity, equity, and inclusion, improvement efforts; Federal deficit and debt; Indo-Pacific, economic and security cooperation; Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; Joint Chiefs of Staff; Military families; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Public debt limit; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Secretary of Defense; Speaker of the House of

Representatives; Tax Code reform; U.S. servicemembers, service and dedication; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Vice President.

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